

AA CONCEPTS

Northern Illinois Area, Ltd. Area 20 Service Letter

Summer 2015

From Area Delegate

By being involved in General Service I have had the opportunity to meet and listen to more people than I could ever have imagined the morning I walked into my first meeting. With each step on this path my world got bigger; my District, our Area, this Region that we participate in, and now the US and Canada. I have lived the phrase I read today with a woman I sponsor "we are people who normally would not mix," (Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 17) and my life has been made richer because of it.

I will be reporting the actions of the 65th General Service Conference at the Assembly and afterwards wherever I am invited. These talks will be the 'what' and 'how' of the week I spent in New York. In this writing I would like to share a bit about two other people who shared at the Conference. Both are Trustees of the General Service Board (GSB). Both are people who would not normally mix. One was Gary L. Northeast Regional Trustee and Panel 55 Delegate from Eastern Pennsylvania and the other was Corliss Burke Class A Trustee (non-alcoholic) from Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada. This means that not only do they physically live on opposite ends of our continent, but also as Class A Trustee, Corliss is not an alcoholic.

Each Conference has a theme that is chosen the previous year. The theme of our Conference this year was "Celebrating 80 Years of Recovery, Unity and Service - The Foundation for Our Future." After roll call each year, the Conference is opened by a Keynote Address. This year Gary was

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From NIA 20 Grapevine Chair

AA GRAPEVINE-THE OLD WHITE MAN'S JOURNAL?

Those of you who missed the Pre-General Service Conference workshop on 4-11-15 might not understand this. See what you miss by staying home? LOL

The Grapevine got this label before I had a chance to discuss any agenda items. Dislike for current GV content was passed around like leftover Easter candy. The Grapevine articles were dismissed because they didn't seem relevant to some people with double-digit sobriety. Stories with the same; boy gets drunk, boy finds God, boy lives happily ever after theme are boring. I admit that I seldom read every story in each issue. To be honest, I have some issues I have never opened once. I have grown beyond the needs of early sobriety to be reassured that I was on the right path. To me, the Grapevine has become that old friend who tells his story over and over at home group so often that if he misses a meeting, you could tell it for him. The value of his story is not in what I get from it. The value lies in the effect his story has on those who hear it for the first time. What he was like, what happened, and what he is now. You know, sort of like all those stories in the Grapevine.

My district 22 friend, Herbert, told me that he subscribes, reads, and uses the Grapevine in his service commitments.

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Concepts is published quarterly by the Northern Illinois Area of Alcoholics Anonymous. It is intended as a service letter to keep Northern IL Area, districts, and GSRs informed of service opportunities, events, and experience relevant to carrying the AA message. Subscription is free but generally limited to A.A. members within the NIA geographical area. All publication costs are paid by A.A. members through their contributions to NIA. Opinions expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the thinking of Alcoholics Anonymous, NIA or the Editor. Comments, suggestions and subscription requests plus shares of experience, strength and hope, should be directed to the editor:

Concepts@aa-nia.org

All A.A. members are encouraged to see Concepts on-line at:
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If your NIA Treasurer Envelope says St. Charles, Barrington, or Bourbonnais, it's Old. Throw it away!

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Proving that old black men read the Grapevine too.

Jim Haas
NIA Grapevine Chair

From the editor

Hello Ladies and Gentlemen.

The humor in this issue is not on one page. It is scattered. It is the way the columns went together. I hope you laugh out loud.

Cheryl wrote an article on primary purpose. We surely have a responsibility to adhere to our primary purpose. We don't have a problem giving drinkers time to come to the idea they are alcoholics. For some reason we have problems giving addicts time to realize they are alcoholics. It is up to AAs well-grounded in the Traditions to help all newcomers understand what is appropriate. And outbreaks of inappropriate behavior do not discriminate.

Elections may feel months away but are the Assembly after this one. Rich seems to find it disturbing that he was the only one that stood for Alt Delegate that day. But to me, the Assembly voted when no one stood with him. Rich is right: healthy elections have more than one or two people standing for each position. And you will not be put in a position you cannot handle, even if it feels like you can't meet the responsibilities.

I stand for positions because I have a responsibility to AA. The chapter is titled into action, not into apathy. I would also like to stay sober, so I must serve in some voting capacity. Without general service I would have less peace and serenity in my life.

Submissions for the next issue will be due August 22.

Thank you for your submissions.

Heather S. Concepts Editor

extended the loving invitation to address the Conference. Professionally, Gary is a university professor and, as you might imagine, is fully able to articulate his thoughts. He brought forth some topics that we all need to consider well in the coming years. Here are brief quotes highlighting two of his points:

Singleness of Purpose: How do we best counsel the multi-addicted in considering their "problems other than alcohol" while in the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous? We want to honor our primary purpose, but we do not wish to shut the door on any who need us.

Size of Our Membership: In its formative years, Alcoholics Anonymous experienced an explosive growth in membership. Some recent estimates, however, suggest that we have reached essentially a steady state. We need to explore new strategies and new modes of communication to help keep our message alive and relevant, while still respecting the principle of "attraction rather than promotion."

These are just a few of the points he made, and just a couple sentence of each. I hope they bring a flavor of what he had to say. It was, for me, a thoughtful talk that put me in the right frame of mind for the work we were to do. It raised the questions that I think we need to address at all levels of service.

The conversations start in our home groups. How do we treat the new member who walks in that probably has used more than just alcohol to earn their seat? Are we patient enough with them to talk about the Traditions in a manner that invites inclusivity and not push them back out the

door? Can we give them time and tools to decide for themselves if they too are alcoholic? Can we guide them in the idea that Singleness of Purpose is about what we talk about IN the meeting, not what got us TO the meeting?

At the end of the Conference the rotating Trustees say their farewells after Saturday breakfast. Five of the six rotating Trustees were present, two of these were Class A, non-alcoholic. The Trustees' biographies are impressive, and none more so than those who are Class A. Corliss Burke has spent 26 years working in the addiction field. Her vocation helps to understand her love of AA. She is willing to give up countless hours in service to our fellowship that she does not need the way we do.

Her talk touched on what AA has done for her and how it changed her life. She shared that she has worked the Steps and owes much of what she has today to her service sponsor who took her through the Steps. What struck me though was her quotes from Language of the Heart and how her talk aligned with that of our Keynote Address.

To quote what Corliss shared: Bill W. wrote, "Though three hundred thousand did recover in the last twenty years, maybe half a million more have walked into our midst, and then out again. No doubt some were too sick to make even a start. Others couldn't or wouldn't admit their alcoholism. Still others couldn't face up to their underlying personality defects. Numbers departed for still other reasons.

"Yet we can't well content ourselves with the view that all these recovery failures were entirely the fault of the newcomers themselves. Perhaps a great many didn't receive the kind and amount of sponsorship they sorely needed. Perhaps we didn't

From the Area Delegate continued from p. 3

communicate when we might have done so. Perhaps more often than we think, we still make no contact at depth with those suffering the dilemma of no faith.” (The Language of the Heart, p. 252).

Corliss spoke of how our membership numbers have become flat and of our Singleness of Purpose. That the numbers in AA are not in pace with the growth of the population, and she said “I wonder if the lack of growth of our Fellowship has to do with the sometimes rigid application of singleness of purpose, which Bill W. so carefully explained to us. The issue, of course, is not with the sentiment of singleness of purpose, as we all know how crucial it is to AA’s survival.

Perhaps though, there is at times, a rigidity in application. The still suffering alcoholic so desperately needs this program, but that need is often in the context of the requirement for other programs and services as well. I’m sure as a professional in the field of alcoholism for so many years, Corliss has seen the changes in the people who come needing help. When many of us got sober, our primary problem was alcohol, but even those of us with 20+ years of sobriety may have been exposed to other substances; maybe even used some of them.

I too am concerned with how rigid we can sometimes be when a newcomer talks about their drug use. I sometimes wonder if we were writing the Big Book today if the story of Dr. Paul would be included. Would we even consider the story “Doctor, Alcoholic, Addict?” Would we allow a new story to be added without edit if it included sharing “So I immediately started taking and shooting pep pills. Eventually I was taking forty-five milligrams of the long-acting Bensedrine and forty-five of the short-acting... For the leveling off process, I just

loved intravenous Demerol...” (Alcoholics Anonymous, page 410) He spoke of shooting morphine, taking codeine and Percodan and tranquilizers and that he never considered himself a pill head.

How many of us have sat in meetings singing the praises of his sharing on acceptance? How many have quoted “Nothing, absolutely nothing, happens in God’s world by mistake” (Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 417) when we have reached a new understanding? How many lives has he touched and continued to touch in his sharing about what he found here?

Yet today how many of us would rush to tell him he could not talk about those outside issues? How many of us tell the newcomer not to talk about their cocaine use, or of their heroin addiction, or any of those other things that got them here? Let us find a way to lead them gently to the idea of Singleness of Purpose. That here in the rooms we talk about our recovery from the disease of alcoholism and that we share in “a general way what it was like.”

Most of the women I’ve sponsored over the years have used more than just alcohol. As we’ve worked the Steps together we have talked more about the disease and less about the ways and means of it. Generally I’ve heard that it helped them drink longer, or brought them down smoother, or gave them the fallacy that they weren’t that bad. I’ve watched men and women come in who thought they had just a problem with drugs, only to come back in when they learned that drinking wasn’t an option either... if they lived that long.

I’ve stood at the side of too many coffins where they may not have taken the

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From the Area Delegate continued on p. 5

liquid of alcohol, but they died from the disease of alcoholism.

I believe that Gary and Corliss were on target with concerns for our future. The dually addicted isn't a new phenomenon. It was a topic of concern when I got here, it was a topic of concern when Bill was writing the Traditions, and it will still be a topic when you and I have long shuffled on to the big meeting.

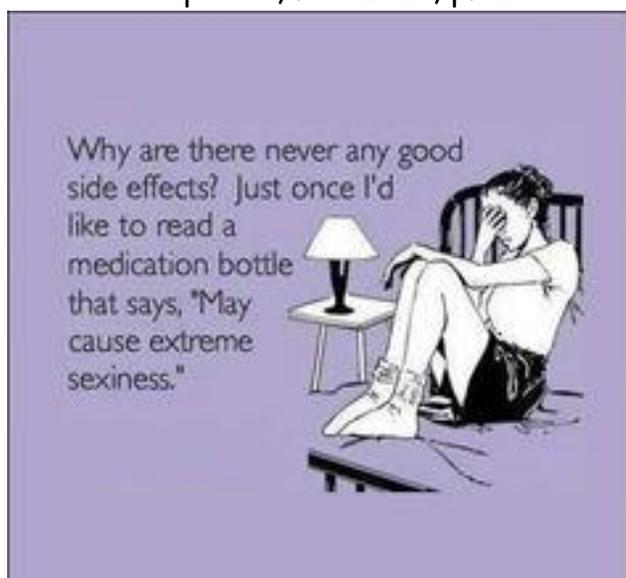
I would suggest to you one last quote from this Conference. It was as Gary ended his talk and I think it expresses what I hope we can all keep in mind going forward. He said: "We frequently say to you at the close of each General Service Conference, 'You are now a part of A.A.'s history.' I would submit that you are also a part of A.A.'s future."

Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to serve, and to grow beyond my home group.

Cheryl V. Area Delegate

What's the difference between an alcoholic and a dog? The dog stops whining after you let it back in house.

Grapevine, Feb 2015, p.61



GOD DOESN'T CHOOSE THE QUALIFIED, GOD QUALIFIES THE CHOSEN

As being our most recent Past Delegate, I will be facilitating the election portion of our upcoming Fall Assembly, September 19th, in East Moline. I felt the desire to write some of my thoughts. With the hopes of encouraging you to yourself stand for, or nominate someone you know, who is present at the time, for any of a number of our Service Positions here in Area 20.

I consider myself a member of Alcoholics Anonymous because I'm alcoholic and am fully vested in all three of our legacies- Recovery, Unity and Service. It was important for someone special to me, that I understand that and to be aware of what that means. I started writing of some experience with Recovery and Unity, but it got to long and wasn't really relevant to this message.

With that said, we have another responsibility, to be of Service. This is an action and is very wide ranging, depending upon our experience and capabilities. Very early we are given the duties of saying hello to everybody to make them feel welcome. And that is funny because it makes us feel welcome also. And we make coffee and set up the room so that we all can have a meeting. And we begin to feel as one with everybody.

This brings us to General Service, the action of volunteering ourselves to one of our many Trusted Service positions, to help guarantee the future of Alcoholics Anonymous.

It has not been uncommon in the past to have only 2 or 3 people stand for Delegate or any of our other Officer positions. Or to have only 1 or 2 people stand for any of our Standing

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Committee positions. One would think with the large membership here in Area 20, and the number of people volunteering in our Districts that we could increase that level of participation.

In 2010 I stood as the only candidate for Alternate Delegate. This left me with a very empty feeling. But it also left me with concern regarding our future. And the way that I thought others viewed the future of Alcoholics Anonymous. With over 100 people in the room that day, shouldn't there have been others with the desire to serve in that capacity? I would have thought that answer to be YES.

Earlier that year, in the spring of 2010, I was the Area 20 Corrections Chair. It is a very busy job and my term was winding down. I was looking for a change and had decided to invest my time in my local AA community. My sponsor came back from his first General Service Conference, and knew our elections were coming up. He asked me what I had planned to do. I told him I knew exactly what I wanted to do and that I wanted to be the Alternate GSR of my Home Group. What he said to me was perfect, "that is a very honorable position, but you have learned some very important information along the way, and you have a responsibility to share that, and you owe AA a lot more than that."

Almost three years later, and two elections later, I am in a hotel in New York as a new Delegate waiting for my first General Service Conference to start. And this same sponsor guy texts me a picture of his grandchildren. He says "this is a picture of Alcoholics Anonymous and it was taken in my living room last night. Give them the same opportunity we had." That is why we do what we do. To guarantee that the AA that I found when I got here, is the same AA when I leave here.

Walking into the positions of Alternate Delegate and Delegate, even with what I thought

I knew, I was very aware that I needed to do a lot of work to become the person that I believed could serve you well. As in the title, God didn't choose the qualified. God qualified the chosen.

When I went to my first meeting at the McHenry County Jail, it wasn't my idea. A guy brought me there, and I had nothing to offer. Nothing in the way of a program of recovery, I had never spent more than a weekend there. But there I was, and there once again, God qualified that man that was chosen that night.

So with all that said, if there are any of you that are shying away from standing for one of these positions because you don't think you're qualified, think again and please make yourself available. You will probably be just the right person at that time. And I look forward to seeing you at our Fall Assembly.

Now I'd like to share something a little different that I learned recently. We use what we call Third Legacy Procedures for elections and they can be found on pages S21 and S22 of the Service Manual I am referencing. In there we can go as far as a 4th and 5th ballot and possibly draw the winning candidate from the hat if necessary. What I have observed in the past is that it is possible for someone to clearly not be the favored candidate, but have just enough votes to stay in the election. And they do so with the hope of winning the election by being drawn from the hat.

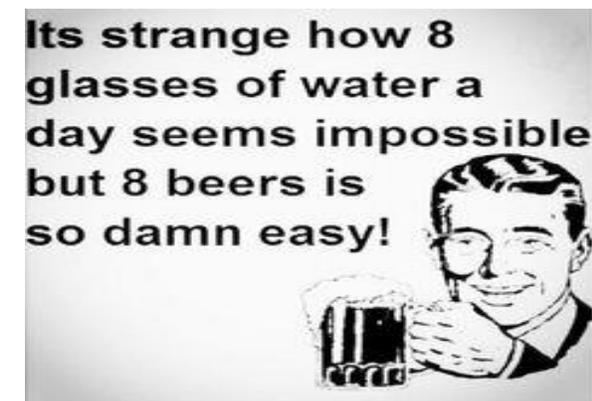
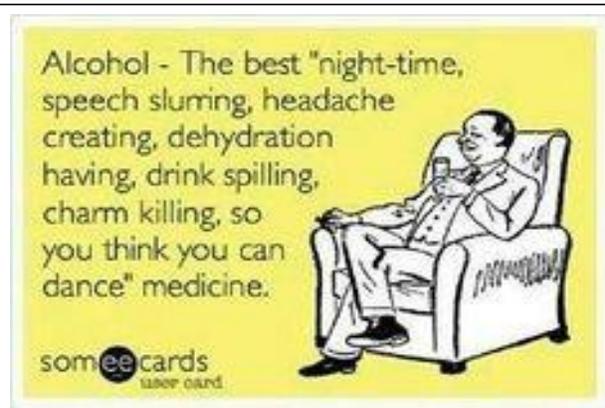
I recently found that was never the intent, that there is a Spiritual Principle aligned with the 4th and 5th ballot. I was in Nebraska this February and met an old Past Trustee. And he told us of meeting a Past Non-Alcoholic Trustee named Jack Norris, who told him this story. Bill Wilson truly believed in unanimity (100%) in voting to guide us in AA. And he

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really struggled with that when it came to elections in AA.

Which brings us Third Legacy Procedures. The purpose of the 4th and 5th ballot, if it got that far, was to take a moment of reflection and ask our self, do I really want to stick with my candidate or do others possibly know better than me? Should I possibly change my vote? Or if we happened to be that candidate that is barely hanging in there, to take a moment and ask ourselves: am I truly the right person at this time? Should I possibly remove myself from this position?

I found that inspiring, because I believe that AA is a series of Spiritual Principles, designed to guide us and change our lives and the way we view ourselves and the world around us. If you got this far, thank you for reading and thank you for this opportunity.
Rich H.



Serving

Half of the delegates in North America are start service in even years, half start service in odd years. So half the delegates at the General Service Conference will be first year delegates and half will be second year delegates. Area 20 holds elections in the odd years so the person may start serving in an even year. So that is this year.

The primary purpose of the Area is to select and inform a delegate. We have other officers, but with the exception of the alt delegate, they are all positions created by the Assembly of NIA20. If the GSR's came together and elected a Delegate every other year, if the GSR's contacted that Delegate about how their group felt about Conference Agenda items, then the purpose of Area would be fulfilled.

Most positions are truly necessary to the smooth operation of the Assembly. Most of the committee chairs reflect committees at the General Service Conference committees. All the positions serve the Assembly. Most positions were created by the Assembly. Bridging the Gap is the most recently created committee by Northern IL Assembly. In creating these committees the representatives of the groups (GSRs) agreed that the AA membership of Northern IL will fill these positions. It is the responsibility of everyone in NIA that positions are filled. The Assembly created the Area structure and the Assembly represents the Area.

Most who serve say it is a privilege. But they are also fulfilling their responsibility to AA for their sobriety. Sometimes

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general service doesn't seem like reaching out to the still suffering, but the answering service is part of general service. The schedule given to the newcomer is created and maintained by general service. Successfully reaching out to the still suffering cannot take place without general service.

There are 2 concrete reasons to be elected to and fulfill positions. The first is you get to stay sober. The second is you have a responsibility to your group, your district, your Area, and AA as a whole that needs to be met. There are other benefits like: momentary sanity, self-esteem, integrity, humility, meeting good people. Standing for the offices listed below feels like a privilege. But by serving I pay my debt to the people who helped me.

All Area officers have common responsibilities and responsibilities particular to their office. The list below is common responsibilities for the Area officers from the Area service handbook.

Attend all NIA Assemblies and Committee meetings each year.

Attend the Pre-Conference Workshop.

Attend the Post Conference Workshop.

Attend the NIA Spring Conference.

Reporting Officers or their Alternates must submit a written report at Assemblies and Committee meetings.

The Delegate and Area Chairperson are expected to attend the State Conference every year.

Other Officers and their Alternates are expected to attend the State Conference when it is held in NIA.

Participate in the Spring Conference and/or State Conference as requested by

the Spring or State Conference Committee. Manage the budgets assigned to your service position.

Be accessible to the Fellowship.

Each particular office has its own responsibilities. The list below is not comprehensive. The list communicates generalities. Please see the Area Service Handbook for important detailed information about responsibilities and qualifications.

Delegate: Attends the General Service Conference twice.

Alt Delegate: Assists the Delegate in collecting the conscious of the Area.

Chair: Keeps order at Assemblies and Area committee meeting.

Alt Chair: Attends Area Conference committee meetings.

Treasurer: deposits income, disperses money, and reports to the Assembly.

Alt Treasurer: Tracks income.

Secretary: Takes minutes of Assemblies and Area committee meeting.

Alt Secretary: Assists the Secretary.

Registrar: Record and track information about all officers, committees, districts and groups in Northern IL.

Alt Registrar: Assists Registrar.

All Area committee members have common responsibilities and responsibilities particular to their office. The list below is some of the common responsibilities from the Area Service Handbook.

Attend all NIA Assemblies and Committee meetings each year.

Attend the NIA Spring Conference.

Attend the Illinois State Conference when NIA hosts the State Conference.

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Be available to attend District meetings upon request.

Be accessible to the Fellowship.

Report on Area Service Committee activities.

Committee Chairs or their Alternates must submit a written report at Assemblies and committee meetings.

Hold Workshops on carrying the message through your Service Committee.

Have available a limited supply of Service Committee related Conference Approved literature and/or service pieces from GSO at Assemblies and Committee Meetings.

Chair Assembly Service Committee meetings including the Pre-Conference Workshop.

Share ways to carry the message through your Service Committee at Assemblies and Conferences.

Encourage participation in your Area Service Committee comprised of District Chair persons and their alternates and other AA's interested in service work.

Formulate an informed group conscience regarding Area-wide service opportunities and issues with an emphasis on General Service Conference agenda items.

Mentor the Alternate Committee Chairperson in order to prepare him or her to become Chairperson in a future rotation.

The individual committees are:

Answering Service
Archives
Bridging the Gap
Cooperation with the Professional (CPC)
Community
Corrections
Grapevine

Literature Chair
Public Information (PI)
Special Needs
Treatment Facilities

Each committee chair has an alternate. The primary responsibility of any alternate is to be able to replace the chair if and when needed. Please review the handbook for important responsibilities and qualifications. The Area Service Handbook is available on the website under the 'information' tab.

Any position will help me stay sober. Sometimes it is homicide, suicide, or service. Obviously I have chosen service because I am still alive and not incarcerated. Staying sober and at liberty is not always easy. Service makes it easier.

The Area group conscience, called the Assembly, has decided that these positions are needed. Thus the Area needs to fulfill the responsibility. Not someone else. But the individual member who is a part of AA. You. Yes. You. ☺☺

The Area has decided to do other things, besides prepare a delegate for the General Service Conference. The Assembly has decided it has a responsibility to reach out to the still suffering alcoholic. Members take responsibility for the action called for by the group conscience.

Heather S.

It's a 10 minute walk from my house to the pub. But strangely, it is an hour walk from my pub to the house.
Grapevine, Jan. 2015, p. 61

Announcement

Alcoholics Anonymous: www.aa.org NIA 20: www.aa-nia.org

Vonnie T. has started a meeting @ Lakewood Nursing home on Saturdays @ 2 P.M.! 14716 South Eastern Ave. Plainfield, IL 60544

Sat June 13 Summer Assembly, 9 am @ Lord of Life SE corner Rte. 38 & La Fox Rd, La Fox. Elburn for GPS devices

Sat June 20 Fox Valley Open. Speaker @ 7:30. Lord of Life SE corner Rte. 38 & La Fox Rd, La Fox. Elburn for GPS devices

Sat June 27 Concepts Funshop. Oak Brook Community Church 3100 Midwest Road (West of Rt. 83 on 31st) Oak Brook, IL 60523. 9:00a.m. – 2:00p.m. \$5.00 Includes 'Lite' Lunch

Sat June 27 RockyPAA Tubing and Cookout, Tubing @ 12:30PM from Bauman Park, 218 S Walnut St. Cherry Valley, IL to: Kishwaukee Forest Preserve. Cook-Out @ 4 pm in Kishwaukee Forest Preserve 5757 Blackhawk Road (Mulford Rd & Blackhawk Rd) contact Kelly 847-778-6110

July 2-5 2015 International convention of AA. Atlanta GA. www.aa.org

Sat July 11 D52 Bridging the Gap workshop. 10:30-2pm Johnson Lecture Hall, Riverside Hospital 350 N. Wall St Kankakee 60901, Contact Heather 815 468 7890

Aug. 7-9 8th Annual Wolf River – Nicolet AA Camping Trip @ Bear Paw Outdoor Adventure Resort & Campground N3494 Hwy 55, White Lake, WI 54491, Campsites \$18 Per Site (~6 People) Per Night Cabins from \$75 Per Night call Bear Paw at 715-882-3502 to reserve a campsite/cabin and mention this trip. More info and lodging details at www.bearpawoutdoors.com

Sat Aug 8 Summer committee meeting, 9 am @ Lord of Life SE corner Rte. 38 & La Fox Rd, La Fox. Elburn for GPS devices

Aug 28 - 30, 2015 Illinois State Conference Marriot Hotel and Conference Center. Normal, IL. 2015ISCAA@gmail.com

Sat Sept 19 Fall Assembly/ Area Elections Faith Walk World Outreach Center, East Moline.

Sat Oct. 10 A Way Out annual anniversary party at the Libertyville civic center in Libertyville. A free dinner followed by a speaker: Bob D. from Las Vegas.

Sat Oct 17 Fall Committee Meeting 9 am @ Lord of Life SE corner Rte. 38 & La Fox Rd, La Fox. Elburn for GPS devices

Sat Oct 24 22nd Big Book Conference from 9-4 pm @ Countryside Church Unitarian Universalist 1025 N. Smith St. Palatine, IL 60067. Contact Chuck S 847-770-8200 chascfs@yahoo.com

Nov 13-15 East Central Regional Forum @ Crowne Plaza Milwaukee Airport Hotel

Sat Nov. 14 Kankakee Mini-conference @ Kankakee Civic Auditorium 803 S. 8th St Kankakee IL 60901 Registration at 9, program from 10-4 Contact Steve R. 815 263 0184

*There is a King named Alcohol...
He rules throughout the land
All he rules will surely fall...
Under the influence of his command*

*Behind the gates of insanity...
Is where his kingdom lies
The scorch of all humanity...
The king of your demise*

*Sip by sip he slithers in...
And soon he takes control
Drip by drip he will begin...
To rape you of your soul*

He leaves behind a destructive path...

*He spreads misery and pain
All he rules soon feels his wrath...
Darkness follows this Kings rein*

*This evil King of whom I speak...
Does not discriminate
The young the old the strong the weak...
Fall prey for him to take*

*Recoil from gifts this King brings...
The most cunning King of all
More baffling and powerful than all the Kings...
This King named Alcohol.*

Gordon R.

